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#### REYNARD TAKES HIS OWN PICTURE

Intent on his own business, which is getting the bait, he trips the wire that explodes the powder in the flash-pan, and the camera does its work

## FOXING THE FOX BY FLASHLIGHT

CAMERA ADVENTURES ON SANTA CATALINA ISLAND

BY WILLIAM V. WARD

**S**ANTA CATALINA ISLAND, discovered in 1542 by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, when sailing under the orders of the viceroy of New Spain, is the best known of the islands in the Santa Barbara Group, which lie off the coast of Southern California. During the past 500 years it has grown from a wild desert island, frequented only by the Torqua Indians and later by pirates, to a sheep and cattle land and a great resort and summer playground for the sun-loving Californians. The only town, Avalon, attracts thousands of tourists each year who come to see the submarine gardens from glass-bottomed boats, ride in speedboats, and bathe in the warm waters of the Pacific.

Fortunately all the gayety, noise and crowds are con-

centrated in Avalon, leaving the rest of the island free and undisturbed. A short walk from town will take one into a beautiful, hilly country covered with chaparral and scrub oak where wild animal life abounds. Such a place is Cherry Valley, located eighteen miles from Avalon on the north coast of the island. It takes its name from a grove of native wild cherry trees which grow in the upper end of the valley; and here it is I sit, in a little cabin, nervously waiting for my flashlight equipment to let me know by flash and boom that I have captured at least one of the denizens of this beautiful isle.

First one little fox growls and then another gives an answering bark. Soon there is a scuffle and one of them



## EATING A FISH-HEAD

Any bait seemed to work—  
meat, fish, raisins, bread  
—all brought results

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breaks away and runs through the greasewood bushes. Evidently they had recently caught a quail that went to roost too near the ground for its safety, and the two are fighting for the possession of the booty. They make me wonder whether they can smell the fish with which I have baited my "set-up" a quarter of a mile away, and whether by walking along the trail to get the fish, they will step into the tripping wire that explodes the flashlight powder.

I do not have long to wait. A tremendous white light

out of breath, the little pieces of fish are gone and the shutter has been tripped. I look around for tracks. Here, right in front of the camera, are two deep scratches in the ground where something started to move out in a hurry. Yes, some animal has been here, and his picture is safely recorded on the camera's film. Wondering what it can be, I change the plateholders, renew the flash charges, and put out fresh bait. Then back down the valley I go, and so to bed until awakened by another explosion.

I must get up at five o'clock the next morning to develop the pictures, for I am very anxious to see the results. It is also only in the early morning that the water is cool enough to use for washing films, for later on in the day the sun pours down on the pipe line, making it so hot as to be almost impossible to touch. Most of them are good; but what is this one? Surely it cannot be!—but here on the film that was exposed last night are *two* foxes. They were coming down the baited trail, each one striving to pick up more fish than the other. The first fox had probably been there before, for he jumped over the tripping wire, as the picture shows; but the second touched the wire with his forefoot, thus causing a picture of both animals to be taken. The negatives are washed and while they are drying I go up into the cherry grove again to prepare another series of explosions for the following night.

Two different ways of getting the fox to pull the tripping wire were tried. In one method the tripping wire was fastened directly to the bait; and when the fox reached down and pulled the bait he took his own picture. As this gave a picture of the animal pulling up the bait, it did not show him walking along in his natural manner. The correct pose was obtained, however, by stretching the trip wire across a fox run or trail. Every few yards along the trail a piece of bait was dropped to encourage the foxes to use that particular trail instead of some other for their nightly wanderings. The resulting photograph showed the animal in a natural mood with no timidity or terror on its face. For bait



## HEADING FOR LESS LIGHTED ZONES

The wily mammal of Catalina decides to hunt elsewhere for the moment, and shows off his bushy tail to fine advantage as he leaves



nearly anything was found to be satisfactory. Meat, fish, bread, and raisins all brought results.

Sometimes people ask me why I can be so cruel as to explode high intensity flashlight powder within eight feet of an animal. It probably does frighten him terribly, but only for a moment. He soon comes back again to look for more food and sometimes to take his picture over again. At one time I was standing about seventy-five feet from the camera when the flash went off. Immediately I went to the camera, changed the plateholders, and reset the apparatus, after which I went a short distance away to wait and watch. It was not ten minutes before the flash went off again. Then retracing my steps, I turned a pocket searchlight toward the camera, illuminating the head of a fox. Its eyes shone like two yellow moons, which blinked and then went out as he gracefully jumped over a bush and disappeared from sight. The next morning when I returned I found the paper cover chewed off the dry battery, which was used to ignite the powder, and the stakes that held the firing line in position dug up by sturdy forefeet. Why this was done I could not guess, unless Mr. Fox had returned again during the night to get even with me for scaring him out of a month's growth.

As the foxes were the only mammals to take their pictures by night it may be safely assumed that they are the only carnivorous animals on that part of the island. Rumors are sometimes passed that skunks and wildcats also inhabit the island, but I have never seen any nor met any one else who has seen them. Birds were recorded



#### A QUAIL SHOOTS HIMSELF

One of the valley quail that gather around the bait for insects in the dusk despite the menace of near-by foxes

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#### DRAWING TWO OF A KIND

The first fox evidently jumped over the tripping wire, but the second one touched it off with his foot





SANTA CATALINA, JEWEL IN THE PACIFIC

Its rugged shores were once the haunts of pirates, but now are peopled with vacation-seekers. The island offers an interesting animal and bird life which may be found not far from the resort centre at Avalon

by the flashlight camera only when it was set too early in the evening, or when it did not go off at all during the night and they had an opportunity to scratch for insects around the bait the next morning. One of these, a valley quail, common on the island, is shown among the illustrations.

The taking of any animal photograph by flashlight is the most interesting sport imaginable. The combined knowledge of the trapper and photographer must be pitted against the cleverness of the animal to be pictured. Nevertheless, it is one of the most discouraging types of photography that ever could be indulged in. It is also expensive. Perhaps one out of every six negatives exposed is worth printing, for there is many a slip between the setting up of the outfit one evening and the developing of the negative the next day. Perhaps a twig

will fall on the firing line. The flash charges may fail to go off. The animal may not be in an artistic pose. The lens may cover with dew. Connecting wires may break. Or, worst of all, a herd of steers may run through the apparatus, knocking it over and trampling valuable instruments—an accident which, most unfortunately, happened to me. But still when a good set of pictures has been taken of a subject which no one else has successfully photographed, there is an extreme satisfaction in knowing that the attempted has been accomplished.

And now that my time on the island is over and I pack my equipment for the sail back across the channel to the mainland, I know that when I arrive at home I will miss the sharp little bark of the foxes and the pairs of shining yellow eyes that mysteriously appear and disappear just outside the border of the campfire's glow.

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In the advertising section announcement is made of the plans for another American Nature Association cruise to southern waters. The idea of a small party of like-minded and congenial travelling companions enjoying specially-arranged shore trips was so popular with the group of thirty-three that travelled to the West Indies last winter, that another trip has been planned this year. The party will be strictly limited to twenty-five for the twenty-three day cruise. If you are planning a winter vacation and wish one of outstanding interest get in touch with our Director of Field Trips.